

Tongue River Ranch Recreational Use Plan

Property Ownership: In April 2007, the State of Montana purchased the Tongue River Ranch. The property will continue to be managed as a working ranch by the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) as state trust lands. All revenues generated from this property are distributed annually to K-12 schools across Montana.

The DNRC is required under a multiple use mandate to manage the property to protect the long-term productivity of the ranch and to provide a positive recreational experience to the public. In support of that, all recreational use must be managed to maintain positive relationships with neighboring ranches, protect the prairie environment and insure a quality recreational experience.

The ranch is legally accessible to the public and provides recreational access to 19,824 acres of State land and an additional 1,145 acres of BLM land. Previous to the purchase this acreage was not open to the public for recreational use. This large blocked ownership, the proximity of the property to Miles City and the media attention associated with the acquisition, creates the potential for a large amount of public visitation to the property.

The DNRC, Pheasants Forever and MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks cooperated in the development of this recreational opportunity and the DNRC has developed a travel management plan (map) for the Tongue River Ranch. The travel management plan provides reasonable access to the ranch property while implementing managed access. The travel management plan identifies roads open for motorized vehicle use, designated parking areas, acreage administratively closed to all use and fishing access sites.

Recreational Access: Effective April 2007 through May 1, 2007 a limited general recreational use restriction is in place for all of the ranch property. This restriction includes NO HUNTING OR SHOOTING prior to May 1, 2007. An administrative closure is also in place in sections 19, 20, 30 Township 4N Range 47E through October 1, 2007. No recreational use of any kind is allowed within this administrative closure.

After May 1, 2007 all general recreational use rules for state land apply on the Tongue River Ranch; all roads are closed to motorized vehicle use unless specifically signed as “open”. Absolutely no off road motorized vehicle use is allowed anywhere on the ranch (including but not limited to wildlife viewing, game retrieval and prairie dog hunting).

Motorized Access: Motorized vehicle travel is allowed on the open road segments under dry or frozen conditions. Vehicle use of the open roads will be prohibited when the road surface is wet and subject to rutting. Road surface displacement to a depth of three inches or greater shall be considered rutting.

Parking : Parking areas will be identified by sign. All roads beyond the signed parking areas are closed to motorized vehicle use. Walk in recreational use is required from the parking areas.

Roads : Roads “open to motorized vehicle use” will be signed on the ground. Parking is allowed anywhere immediately adjacent (within 50 feet) to the open road segments. A road is open to vehicle use only if signed as “open”. Any road not signed is closed to vehicle use.

Adjacent Property: The ranch exterior boundary is fenced. The boundary is signed intermittently and the recreationist is required to recognize the boundary location and not trespass onto neighboring ranches. **Please respect the rights of adjacent private property owners.**

MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks, DNRC and other personnel will provide enforcement of the travel management plan.

Specific rules of use will be detailed at a kiosk to be constructed at the ranch entrance and on the back of the recreational use maps for the Tongue River Ranch.